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S E C R E T KUWAIT 001848

SIPDIS

NOFORN

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/NGA, NEA/ARP

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/04/2013

TAGS: PREL IR

SUBJECT: (S/NF) IRANIAN PROTEST PLANNERS MEET WITH
DISSIDENT CLERIC

Classified By: Ambassador Richard H. Jones for reasons 1.5 (d)
and 1.6 (6)

¶1. (S/NF) Poloff spoke with Washington-based American-Iranian activist Mark Namdar (strictly protect) on May 3, 2003. Mr. Namdar serves as an unofficial spokesman and intermediary for U.S.-based Iranian student movement leader and political asylee Reza Mohajeri-Nejad. Mr. Namdar claims that the Iranian student group Students for Secular Democracy (Jonbesh Daneshjooyan) is planning massive protests in Tehran for July 9 -- the anniversary of the 1999 demonstration and subsequent regime crackdown at Tehran University -- to include occupation of government ministries. Mr. Namdar said Students for Democracy leaders are expecting up to one million protesters.

¶2. (S/NF) Although the group, made up of five separate student organizations and headed by formerly imprisoned student activist Heshmatallah Tabarzadi, is spearheading the demonstrations, Namdar claims the organization has been able to gather support from many segments of society, including Basij forces and people close to President Mohammad Khatami. In addition, Namdar claims Tabarzadi met with Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri four to five days ago to discuss how Montazeri could be a "key figure in this process." Namdar could not provide any additional details about the meeting.

¶3. (S/NF) Asked why such a wide array of movements would be working together, Namdar said that his contacts say people in Iran are so frustrated by their current situation that, despite political differences, they are willing to join hands to try and "overthrow the government." Namdar added that Tabarzadi has contacts within police organizations and has managed to convince them to put their weapons down when the protests begin. In addition, he claims that a large number of Bazaar merchants have agreed to close their shops and join the protests.

¶4. (S/NF) Despite efforts to gather support from all segments of Iranian society, Namdar admits the planning efforts are chaotic, mostly due to a lack of experience by many of the groups involved. However, he said he is optimistic that organizing efforts for the protest are gaining momentum, and he has overcome his initial doubts about the effort. Namdar claims to have already met with VOA and NSC staff, and has an appointment to meet with Iran Desk officers this week.

¶5. (S/NF) Comment: While post has not been able to independently verify any of Mr. Namdar's claims, we thought it best to pass on this information for the record.

JONES